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4. Religious Teaching.

Are not some of the most important *religious teachings* of this passage connected with the following topic:—*The character of Pharisaism and its relations to Jesus*, as illustrating (1) how evil possibly practiced unconsciously, may exist along with professions of high morality, (2) the failure of any endeavor to save men by outward rules of conduct, (3) the danger in too much regard to self-culture and the need of self-forgetfulness in the growth of the religious life, (4) the danger in exalting human ideas, interpretations, customs and ordinances into so great importance as to degrade and practically to nullify the law and will of God, (5) the power of conscientious but mistaken men to hinder a good cause, (6) the necessity of inward, vital piety and a spirit of candor and liberality in the judgment of others.

STUDIES XXVII. AND XXVIII.—THE SERMON ON TRUE DISCIPLES.

LUKE 12 : 13-53.

Remark.—It is desirable that in beginning each “study” the entire passage assigned be read over rapidly and the main divisions of the narrative noted.

I. EXAMINATION OF THE MATERIAL.

[It will be noted that the following order is observed invariably in this work : (1) the verse or section is read and its contents stated in a general way ; (2) important or difficult words and phrases are studied ; (3) a complete statement of the contents of the verse or section is formed in view of the work already done ; (4) the religious teaching is sought.]

§ I. Chapter 12 : 13-21.

1. Read the passage and consider this statement of the subject: *The Example of Covetousness.*
2. Important words and phrases are: (1) *said* (12 : 13), suggested by what? (2) *divide*, (a) had his brother wrongfully seized it? (b) was he desiring more than his legal share? (3) *man* (12 : 14), an indirect rebuke; (4) *covetousness* (12 : 15), the man's secret motive; (5) *life*, i. e. his “real worth;” (6) *because*, etc. (12 : 17), was not this a good reason for doing something? (7) v. 19, notice two mistakes, (a) “thou hast,” (b) “many years;” (8) *is required* (12 : 20), cf. margin and explain “they;” (9) *for himself* (12 : 21), the central point of the whole matter; (10) *rich toward God*, either (a) rich but using riches for God, or (b) rich in spiritual wealth.
3. Observe the following condensed statement of the thought: *When some one asked Jesus to make his brother divide an inheritance with him, Jesus replied, That is not my work. To the people he added, Be not covetous, life is not having many things. The rich man, who had to make larger storehouses for his many goods, was expecting to enjoy his wealth for many years. God called him away that night and his wealth was no longer his, for he was not rich toward God.*
4. An important lesson here is the folly of making the things of this life the chief pursuit.

§ 2. Chapter 12 : 22-31.

1. Read and observe the subject : *The Disciples' freedom from Earthly Cares.*
2. (1) *disciples* (12 : 22), those conscious of a higher life ; (2) v. 23, let the student state the argument ; (3) *to his stature* (12 : 25), cf. margin for a better translation ; (4) *consider* (12 : 27) i. e. " study ; " (5) *doubtful mind* (12 : 29), driven to and fro as a vessel.
3. The student may make out the statement of thought in this section.
4. May not a thought for the religious teaching be found in the hints as to the grounds and results of confidence in God's favor ?

§ 3. Chapter 12 : 32-34.

1. Read and decide on a subject, e. g. *Their Prospects and Ideals.*
2. Make a close study of the following words and phrases ; (1) *fear not* (12 : 32), was this (a) in view of the recent assault, or (b) that they might have the confidence just spoken of (v. 31) ? (2) *sell that ye have* (12 : 33), is this precept local and temporary, or universal ? (3) *treasure*, is this (a) good works, (b) character ?
3. The contents of the passage may be given as follows : *Fear not, my followers, for God purposes to give you success. Give away all you have and so have permanent and safe riches in heaven whither all your life will then direct itself.*
4. Let the student determine a lesson of religious life in these verses.

§ 4. Chapter 12 : 35-40.

1. Criticise the following suggested subject : *Their Devotion to the Kingdom.*
2. Note words and phrases which are important : (1) *let*, etc., (12 : 35), looks back to v. 34, " be so interested in the Kingdom that you will be ever active and watchful " ; (2) *second watch* (12 : 38), from 9 to 12, the " third," from 12 to 3 ; (3) *thief*, etc. (12 : 39), how does this illustrate the completion of the Kingdom ? (4) *broken through*, being made of mud or soft brick ; (5) *son of man cometh* (12 : 40), cf. Lk. 9 : 26.
3. The condensation of the thought is as follows : *Be ready for active work in the night like servants who may have to wait long for their master to return from a banquet, for, finding them waiting, he will greatly honor them. The householder would have kept the thief away had he known when he was coming. So will the Son of Man come ; therefore be ready.*
4. Notice the representation of combined activity and watchfulness as the ideal attitude of the disciple of the Kingdom.

§ 5. Chapter 12 : 41-48.

1. Read and as a result of reading note a subject : *The Special Responsibility of the Upper Servant.*
2. Important or difficult words and phrases are : (1) *unto us* (12 : 41), i. e. " is the promise of reward (v. 37) limited to us ? " (2) *steward* (12 : 42), the upper servant, illustrative of the Apostles' position ; (3) *knew not* (12 : 48), (a) i. e. " knew not fully," (b) as the case is reviewed by the Lord ; (4) *things worthy*, he must therefore be punished.

3. This statement of the contents is suggested : *Peter said, Do you mean us or all, in these promises ? Jesus replied, When the Lord finds a servant faithful and wise, he makes him steward of his household ; but if he abuses the servants and commits excesses, the Lord will come suddenly and cut him off. According to the servant's knowledge of his duty unfulfilled, is his punishment. Men determine responsibility by privilege.*
4. Let the student determine the religious teaching of the section.

§ 6. Chapter 12 : 49-53.

1. After reading the passage consider this subject : *The Time of Conflict.*
2. (1) *I came* (12 : 49), (a) this is a great crisis when servants should be faithful, (b) is there here consciousness of pre-existence? (2) *cast fire* (a) "to bring hot and fiery contentions," (b) "to bring the Holy Spirit," (c) "to purify and destroy;" (3) *already kindled*, as in the assault of the Pharisees, etc.; (4) *baptism*, etc., (12 : 50), "a reference to his burial or the depth and intensity of His sufferings when the waters rolled over His soul," Riddle; (5) *straightened*, oppressed with the expectation.
3. The student may make out the statement of this thought.
4. The religious lessons of this section center about the thought of Peace through conflict and struggle.

II. CLASSIFICATION OF THE MATERIAL,

1. Contents and Summary.

- 1) **The Contents.** The following table of contents is to be learned thoroughly.

THE SERMON ON TRUE DISCIPLES.

- § 1. THE EXAMPLE OF COVETOUSNESS.
- § 2. THE DISCIPLES' FREEDOM FROM EARTHLY CARES.
- § 3. THEIR PROSPECTS AND IDEALS.
- § 4. THEIR DEVOTION TO THE KINGDOM.
- § 5. THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE UPPER SERVANT.
- § 6. THE TIME OF CONFLICT.

- 2) **The Summary.** The following is a suggested condensation of the passage : *Jesus, refusing to answer a man who appealed for help in securing some property, warned against covetousness, showing how a rich man who counted on long enjoying his wealth was that very night summoned to God. His disciples are to have no undue anxiety about things of this life. God will provide these things for them as He does for the lower creation. He will give them the kingdom ; they are to give away their possessions that they may be thoroughly devoted to their work, like servants waiting for the master, like a householder watching for the thief ; for so suddenly will the Son of man come. The apostle, like an upper servant, should be most earnest since his reward will correspond to his conduct and his conduct will be judged by his responsibilities. This is a critical time. Jesus came to bring fire, to produce a division, even in the home.*

2. Observations upon the Material.

The following observations upon the passage should be carefully read over and examined.

- 200) 12: 13-21. This narrative is peculiar to Luke.
 201) 12: 14. Jesus refused to give an opinion of cases involving worldly affairs.*
 202) 12: 14. Jesus seems to be rather harsh toward this inquirer.†
 203) 12: 22. The disciples kept having some anxiety as to their food and clothing.
 204) 12: 22, 29. Jesus desires them not only not to seek after these things but not to permit their minds to be in a constant ferment.‡
 205) 12: 24, 27. Jesus was a close observer of nature.§
 206) 12: 33. The disciples were directed to give away any property they might have.||
 207) 12: 38, 45. Jesus seems to intimate that the consummation of the Kingdom may be long delayed.
 208) 12: 39, 40. But he also adds that the coming of the Son of man will be unexpected.
 209) 12: 47, 48. Jesus teaches that the recompense of his servants will be in accordance with the relation of their conduct to their knowledge of his will.¶
 210) 12: 50. Jesus is greatly disturbed in view of his approaching sufferings.**
 211) 12: 51-53. The purpose of Jesus' coming was to cause division and discord.††

* Hobbes has dwelt upon these words as a confession by our Lord that He was merely a religious teacher, and that He aspired to no control over ordinary human affairs. Undoubtedly He declined to interfere in the case in which He was asked to interfere. . . . But His discourse on covetousness, it seems to me, is the discourse of One who is come to establish a kingdom. How much it differs from the language of one who is laying down a religious or ethical code of precepts, I think you will perceive, if you examine it carefully. *Maurice*, pp. 195, 196.

† Our Lord's words show that He had read the secret of the man's heart. Greed was there, with all its subtle temptations. *Plumptre*, *Luke*, p. 211.

There is a special fitness in such a declaration made in a public discourse at a time when His enemies were watching Him with a view to convict him of illegality. *Bib. Com.*, p. 400.

Christ had not only no legal authority for interfering, but the Jewish law of inheritance was so clearly defined, that if this person had had any just or good cause, there could have been no need for appealing to Jesus. *Edersheim*, II., p. 243 (ab. ed. p. 378).

‡ How vividly he conceived the mental state of the careworn, appears from Luke's version of the counsel against anxiety, which might be thus paraphrased: "Seek not what ye shall eat or what ye shall drink, *neither be ye as a ship raised aloft on the billows of a troubled, tempestuous sea.*" Lk. 12: 29. *Bruce*, *Kingdom of God*, p. 120.

§ What we may reverently speak of as a love of nature, *Plumptre*, p. 214.

Can any one read in His words the images of natural beauty gathered from the fields of Galilee without being convinced that He looked on these landscapes with a loving eye? *Stalker*, *Imago Christi*, p. 61.

¶ [It] indicates not a general principle but its application to that particular period, when the faithful disciple required to follow the Lord, unencumbered by worldly cares or possessions. *Edersheim*, II., p. 217 (ab. ed. p. 360).

¶ Cf. *Pulp. Com.*, I., p. 338.

** In this whole utterance of our Lord . . . we see a striking revelation on the one hand of His truly human, on the other hand His truly Divine nature. With a genuinely human feeling, He shrinks back from His suffering and longs for the beginning of His conflict. But with Divine knowledge, He calculates at the same time the consequence of the combat. *Van O.*, p. 209.

†† The Saviour here speaks not of the highest and ultimate, but yet of a very essential purpose of His manifestation on earth, which, however, was in its turn to be a means for the attainment of a higher end, of a peace, namely, which could be attained through this strife alone. *Van O.*, p. 208.

3. Topics for Study.

Some of the most important and related "observations" are collected and organized here for further study.

The Members of the Kingdom. [Obs. 201-204, 206-209] : (1) Their position in relation to their own needs,* (a) freedom from anxiety about earthly things, (b) the example cited (12 : 24, 27), (c) grounds stated, dignity of man (12 : 23), trust in the Father's care (12 : 30). (2) Their attitude toward wealth, (a) covetousness forbidden (12 : 15), (b) their property to be distributed (12 : 33), (c) the motive in this (12 : 34). (3) Their relation to the Kingdom, (a) the parable of the servants (12 : 35-38), (b) its meaning in connection with 12 : 31. (4) Their relation to the Christ, (a) waiting for his return, (b) watchful in view of its unexpectedness, (c) their recompense dependent upon their activity and faithfulness in respect to him.

4. Religious Teaching.

The *religious teachings* of the "Study" may be gathered together under the subject of the "Topic for Study" already given, viz. *The members of the Kingdom*. Let the student make a religious application to present life of the points there suggested for study.

* How great is the man who can really be, not by natural easy-mindedness, but by faith and devotion to the higher ends of life, as free from care as the birds or the unconscious wild flowers! Those who are incessantly distracted by secular solicitudes may more than doubt whether any such men ever existed. One at least did, even Jesus, and He has had genuine followers; probably many more than we know of. Bruce, *Kingdom of God*, p. 214.